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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN: KING TASKS NEW PREMIER WITH REFORM,
TEAMWORK

REF: A. AMMAN 2576
[1](#)B. AMMAN 2563

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
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[1](#)1. (S//NF) SUMMARY: King Abdullah's letter of designation to Prime Minister Samir al-Rifa'i on December 9 told the new premier to form a Cabinet that will have a clear plan for continuing and implementing reform efforts, and emphasized that teamwork and transparency are essential for reforms to move forward. The letter also stated that the new parliament is to be elected and convened "no later than the last quarter of 2010." As in designation letters past, the King touched on the economy and reiterated Jordanian foreign policy goals. Abdullah throughout the letter appears preoccupied with preventing corruption in the new government, probably reflecting his view that the previous Cabinet was undermined by corruption as well as its own internal stalemate on reform legislation. With Cabinet minister appointments looming, parliamentary elections anticipated, and talk of real political change in the air, the King appears to be angling for the right combination of factors to mold Jordan's political infrastructure into a better-functioning political system. END SUMMARY.

PUSH FOR PROGRESS ON POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS

[1](#)2. (S//NF) Rifa'i and the Cabinet-to-be are charged with amending the electoral law and improving election procedures. (Comment: if completed as intended, these tasks may serve to distance the new government and the incoming parliament from the lack of credibility of their predecessors (refs A and B). End comment.) The letter calls for simultaneous political and economic reforms and argues that they will encourage participation in decisionmaking through effective institutions capable of working transparently and objectively. Parliamentary elections are to be included in political reform efforts as part of a "comprehensive political development program" that advances political party platforms and "opens the door for all Jordanians to participate."

MINISTRY-PARLIAMENT HARMONY AND ANTI-CORRUPTION RANK HIGH

[1](#)3. (U) The letter includes specific instructions for each ministry to draft Cabinet-approved work plans within two months to ensure that the government "works as one harmonious team." Moreover, the Cabinet is tasked with drafting a protocol document to serve as the rules of engagement between the Cabinet and parliament. The new parliament, once elected, is encouraged to draft a similar document to guide cooperation with the Cabinet.

14. (C//NF) More interesting than the King's calls for reform and teamwork is his focus on preventing corruption in the new government--this designation letter, to a greater extent and more specifically than letters past, emphasizes issues of corruption and includes specific preventative actions to be taken. The incoming Cabinet is required to write a code of honor for each ministry that outlines the "moral and legal" criteria to which the ministers will adhere. This public document, based on the constitution, is to serve as a reference for Jordanians to judge each minister's performance. Additionally, the government is required to issue a similar document to all public servants at every level.

THE USUAL ECONOMIC AND FOREIGN POLICY SUSPECTS GET A NOD

15. (U) Other domestic and international topics were addressed in the final pages of the letter. Economic highlights include the need to achieve food and water security, fight poverty and unemployment, boost Jordan's competitiveness through economic and fiscal policies, and better balance public expenditures. Improving educational and healthcare programs, protecting the rights of families, women, and children, and improving public services in general also made the letter. Turning to foreign policy issues, the King emphasized Jordan's duty to defend the Palestinian right to an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the importance of a two-state solution in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative.

16. (S//NF) Comment: The King since his 1999 ascension to
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the throne has not been able to find the right combination of ministers, MPs, and domestic sentiment to overhaul Jordan's political system. While the King's enthusiastic push for revitalized reforms and expressed anti-corruption sentiment is noteworthy, his designation letter to the new premier is a tall order for a Cabinet and a parliament not yet formed, much less proven. End comment.
Beecroft